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THE CHAIN OF HELP

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

By Roza Riaikkenen

My father Pinchus Lamdansky was an intellectual, a highly cultivated person. He was an engineer - designer with European education. He knew eight languages, loved music and art, collected books and prints, sang well and danced ballroom dances. He had a fine, I would say “French”, sense of humour. For me, as a school student, it was endlessly fascinating listening to his explanations of the styles of architecture, when we walked together along the ancient small streets of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania in the Baltic coast.

My mother Sara Lamdansky (born Shur) studied mathematics in the Kaunas University, and worked as an accountant, later the chief-accountant of the Lithuanian Publishing Department. To work hard and try to achieve the highest standard of work possible was her credo, as well as cleanliness: everything had to be cleaned and washed till it shined! Even when she was really tired, she couldn't go to sleep if any homework remained undone in the apartment we lived in. She herself and her home were bathed in the fragrance of cleanliness.

I remember that our neighbours didn't like to wash the apartment block staircase when it was their turn. My mum wouldn't argue with them. Instead, she would wash the stairs herself. When asked, she explained her behaviour with her wish to remain peaceful with our neighbours and keep the house clean.

We read a lot of classics and discussed the discoveries of science. My father constantly generated new ideas and tried to apply them in his work. Unfortunately, his ideas, though making his projects more effective, often would lead to delays in finishing them, and were frowned upon by his bosses rather than rewarded.

I remember that, with my father, we often visited concerts and the Opera theatre in Vilnius. On my, maybe 13th, birthday, I received a precious gift, a record-player, and could endlessly listen to my favourite arias and ballet music. The first piece of furniture, my parents bought after

the war, was an old Knauss piano. This piano served me well while I studied music. It is still with me now, serving my grandchildren. Its joyful sounds are with us, multiplied by my family's love of music.

I also remember the prints of classical paintings on the walls of our flat: the "Schokoladenmadchen" by Jean Etienne Liotard and Caravaggio's "The Cardsharps" above the piano. I think that, possibly, there were no pictures on biblical themes available at that time in the Soviet Vilnius. However, in the evenings, my father often told me the Old Testament tales we were unable to learn in school because the leaders of the Soviet Union had forbidden the teaching of spiritual subjects connected with any religion.

In the 30's, when my parents met, my father had just graduated from the Gent University in Belgium, and had returned to Lithuania. From Europe he brought some socialist and communist ideas that strongly influenced him and other people at that time.

None of our family has been directly involved in the socialist or communist movement, and none were members of any party. Actually, it was conscience that mattered to my parents and loudly spoke to them about the necessity of sacrificing and sharing. That is why the ideas of justice, equity and brotherhood strongly influenced them.

As my mother explained to me, there was poverty in Lithuania. My parents wanted full-heartedly to share their possessions, which have been earned by hard work, with the poor to improve the quality of their life. They were ready to give out a part of their clothes, rooms, money and food. My mum remembered how she herself often could not attend school because her parents were unable to pay the fee, and she wanted to help any other child to receive a proper education because education was always a priority in our family.

From this condition of mind, it is understandable, why my paternal grandmother Rachel Lamdansky participated in an organization which helped imprisoned communists. She prepared parcels for the prisoners and assisted them in different ways.

One such communist - prisoner was Kazimeras Varnauskas, my nanny Brone's fiancé, and later husband. By helping him and Brone, as I understand, my grandma started a chain of compassion and help. The Varnauskas family continued this chain through the years of WW2, and this chain eventually saved my life.

From the very beginning of the war, Brone tried to find us, me and my parents. She didn't know that my father fled to Russia, that we had lost him in the panic of the bombardment on the first day of war, and that my

grandfather was killed at the first day of occupation, after we unsuccessfully tried to flee. We returned to our home, which we found in utter havoc. The streets of the Viliampole suburb, where we lived before the war, were covered in blood, and houses were looted.

Our family has stored some food stock before the war because we knew what was going on across the Europe and were on the alert. We had a stock of jam, flour, sugar and chocolates. In just several hours we lost everything. This happened before the fascists came, when some of the locals murdered the Jews they could find and looted their houses.

We couldn't stay in such an unsafe place anymore. We – my Mum, Grandma (my father's mother) and I – were thrown into a situation where we had to find shelter and basics of survival. Since we had no stock of food anymore and in fact nothing material to rely upon, we could only rely on our human spiritual properties and communications with other people.

When, in the first days of war, the Germans occupied Kaunas, they collected all Jews into one ghetto, a kind of concentration camp, surrounded by barbed wire. Later on, they began forming groups of young and able people, to use them as slave workers in the factories outside the ghetto boundaries. My mother was such a slave worker.

Eventually Brone found us in the Kaunas ghetto and was able to help us. The fascists didn't care about paying or at least feeding their slaves. The faster the slaves perished, the more efficiently their job was completed. In the ghetto, people received some "rations" which were not enough even for survival. People mostly lived on food they managed to receive from Lithuanians in exchange for their possessions. My Mum could not bring to the ghetto anything worthy for exchange from our looted home, and we starved.

From the very day Brone met my Mum, she began bringing her bread and any other food she could find. It was difficult in these days of war. It was dangerous also to pass along food for the ghetto Jews because the guards wouldn't allow locals to communicate with them. But Brone was desperate to help us, and somehow managed to do this. Meanwhile, Kazimeras babysat their baby girl, allowing his wife to go and do anything she could for another child's survival.

There were three so-called "actions" of mass destruction in the Kaunas ghetto. We survived the first, "Little Action", where the German soldiers with the help of the Lithuanian police searched houses and collected people for extermination. Fortunately for us, they stopped three houses before ours.

The second, “Big Action”, was targeted at children and elderly people. Such were defined as a “burden” in the understanding of the occupants. All the inhabitants of the ghetto were ordered to go out to an open place for selection. The young and healthy were selected to one side – for work; and families with more than one child or with sick or elderly members to another side – for eradication.

A lady, in whose house we occupied a room, suggested that my mother pretend that she, the lady’s unmarried brother and I were a family. In this case we would survive the “action”, but my grandmother would leave alone and definitely not survive. My Mum rejected this suggestion, and, of course, we were selected for eradication. A policeman led us together with other people, who were pushing prams with babies and carrying the sick and elderly on stretchers. My Mum understood we were at the brink of death. She gave her watch, the last remaining valuable thing, to the policeman. He took the watch, but did nothing to change our situation.

The wide road was empty. When we entered the gates of the place where we had to be killed, my mother saw a German officer from the SS, a special military force that executed the most cruel extermination actions. He was in charge of order in this place. Mum didn’t know who or what urged her to do this, but she spoke to the officer in German, the language she knew well. She didn’t remember later what exactly she said, but her words made the officer look into my eyes. He then ordered us to stay behind the gates.

My mother did not know what would follow and how we would escape death, but the officer seemed to know. Two young men, who had before carried the stretchers with the sick, were returning to the ghetto, and we began running after them. The officer didn’t pay any attention to our manoeuvre. This was a definite breach of his orders. He was obviously obliged either to shoot us himself or to send us to the place where we would be killed anyway.

But nothing of this kind happened. We continued to run after the men as quickly as we could, trying to catch our chance for survival. Grandma couldn’t run quickly enough and asked to leave her and save the child. But Mum couldn’t leave her to her true death, and we continued to run together till we reached the people who had been selected for work and melted into their crowd. In such a way, we were miraculously saved and left to continue our ordeal in the ghetto.

Why did the SS officer let us go? Was it something my mother said him? Or probably her words just made him to look into the child’s eyes?

Possibly, he subconsciously felt that the Source of life in the Jewish child's eyes and in him was the same – the Inner God. And the officer, who had sent maybe hundreds of innocent people to their deaths, could not infringe upon the Source of life that he met in these eyes.

If this was the case, then maybe a politician, a leader of a nation or state, a religious leader or any influential person, before calling their followers or giving orders to kill, to bombard, to exterminate and so on, with whichever purpose it would be justified, should primarily look into the eyes of at least one child whose life might suffer from these actions?

My mother worked at a weaving mill, and my grandmother looked after me. The most difficult thing for my Mum was to leave us home, as she left for her work, and not to know, whether she would find us alive or not when she returned. Sometimes, Mum would bring me cardboard tubes from the weaving mill. I would always wait for these tubes. They were my only toys at that time in the ghetto. At other times, someone would give her a treat for her child. Once, I remember, for maybe Easter or another holiday, I had a feast: a chicken wing, an egg and a homentash – a traditional Jewish pastry with poppy-seed that I liked very much. It was difficult for me to decide from which treat to begin celebrating.

I had friends in the ghetto. It seemed I lived an ordinary child's life in this hellish place. Then the third "action" came – the "Children Action", and this time the Germans were determined to finish all the remaining ghetto children and elderly people. In the morning, all the working people were let out of the ghetto, and then the "action" began. Germans ordered everyone to stay home. A truck went along the street, and the soldiers and policemen collected children and elderly for killing. If a mother didn't give out her child, they were killed together.

Fortunately, my Mum was home after a night's work and already had some experience from the past "actions". She knew that the people of the ghetto had made efforts to prepare the hiding places for the children. She went to hide me, but she never ever saw my Grandma again. Remembering the past "actions", and understanding that together we had no chance for survival, this time my Grandma collected her personal things and left the house to meet her death alone.

I was passed in a sack to an attic - one of the hiding places the people of the ghetto have prepared for the children. I remember how I felt scared in the darkness of this attic. I was in a complete convulsion of fear of being found by the Germans. Even later, in my childhood, I would never be able to play the "hide and seek" games which always recalled this horrible feeling.

This time again, there were people who assumed responsibility for our survival. When the men who stayed on guard, decided that this hiding place had become unsafe, they carried us children in sacks, pretending we were flour or potatoes, to a safer hiding. There was less room in this place, and Mum remembered me shouting: "Let me inside, I want to live!" And I was taken inside, and was saved this time also. After the "action" finished, we returned home. Now, Mum had to hide me all the time, day or night, and could not let me go outside, because the Germans wouldn't tolerate any children alive in the ghetto.

While the war went on, the situation turned for the worst. The German army suffered defeats and had to leave the occupied territories. It was clear that one day they would leave Kaunas also. And they would liquidate the ghetto with all its inhabitants. My Mum understood that she was incapable of saving her child in the ghetto. She began searching for a Lithuanian family which would agree to take and hide me.

She asked Brone for assistance. It was a difficult task for the Varnauskas family, and it was extremely dangerous because the fascists, if finding a Jewish child in a Lithuanian family, would undoubtedly execute the whole family together with this child.

Brone and Kazimeras couldn't take me into their house because they lived in a suburb far away from the ghetto. Besides, they had a baby girl, and Kazimeras was known as a former communist. It would be unsafe for them and me to live together. Therefore, Brone began to search for foster parents for me, at that time a five year old child.

She had to think hard about the people she was familiar with: were they reliable, would they take risks of hiding a Jewish child and would they not submit me to the Germans, as it sometimes happened? With my Jewish language and dark eyes and hair, of course, I didn't look like a Lithuanian, and they would have to hide me so nobody knew I was there.

It is hard to imagine, but the chain of help, once began, continued to work. The childless couple Baksha, Maria and Kazimeras, friends of Brone, whose little weatherboard house was situated near the factory where my Mum used to work, agreed to hide me and become my foster parents. It was not an easy decision for them, especially because the police office was situated nearby, and a German soldier lived in a house in the same yard.

One day, with the assistance of a young man from the ghetto, my mum managed to take me through the barbed wire of the ghetto's boundary. They gave some money to the German soldier who stayed on

guard, and he promised to let us go and not to shoot if only the guard, next to him, wouldn't notice. If he noticed, then bad luck – he would shoot us.

When we successfully passed through the barbed wire, we ran through the dark streets of the town-in-war with the sirens of air-raid and potentially dangerous encounters. Eventually we came to the warmth and light of Baksha's house. Then Maria and Kazimeras Baksha assumed responsibility for maintaining my life, and fulfilled this mission with all their heart and power.

That night I could barely see or understand anything. After all the fears and excitement of the day, I fell asleep and didn't see how my mother left the Baksha's house for the ghetto. Next morning, when I woke up, I found myself in an unfamiliar place, which had to become my home, and with people I didn't know, but who had to become my family. I didn't understand their language either, and I had no choice but to learn. From then it began - this habit of learning new languages and, together with the languages, of realizing and accepting different human ways of living, thinking and understanding.

Possibly, I was not always obedient and behaved not as an angel. As my Mum told me later, once Kazimeras Baksha came to the factory, where she used to work, and confessed that he hurt me. He was repentant: how could he punish a child who had been already so punished by the circumstances of life? Possibly, he understood that the child needed not only food, but anything interesting and developing. Somewhere he found a school book and began teaching me literacy. This was my learning and entertainment simultaneously. In such circumstances I learned to enjoy the process of reading and learning through a book.

I missed my mother and kept asking, when she would come to me. A couple of times she visited me, of course, under a supervision of a guard from her workplace. She told the guard that she was going to the Lithuanians to exchange things for food. Kazimeras would give the guard alcohol and entertain him, whilst my Mum visited me.

I wanted a doll, and my mum brought me a doll from the ghetto. Parents of a girl who had been killed by the Germans gave her this doll without any questions. They had guessed who needed their daughter's doll. I did not see my Mum from then on, as she was too afraid of giving my hideout away. Baksha promised her to keep their cellar open in the case she would need to hide. But my Mum never used this opportunity, even when she already knew that the ghetto would be liquidated, and she would be either killed or forced to move to the West, to a concentration camp in Germany.

I remember my second mother, “mamite”, as I used to call her (“mommy” in Lithuanian), a little woman with a button nose. She cared about every living being: people, cats and birds – everyone could receive food and help from her hands. “Mamite” lost her parents at a very young age and grew up as an orphan. She had a sister and they were very close to each other.

“Mamite” worked hard her whole life. She completed perhaps no more than a couple of years of primary school in her village, but her wisdom always fascinated me. “Bus gerai”, which means in Lithuanian: “everything will be all right” – was her usual saying. And you trusted her words because you felt that there was a real understanding of life behind them.

I remember her coming home after a twenty kilometre journey to a remote village. She had to go there to exchange things for food, otherwise we would starve. Every time she went, she would bring me (only for the child!) some honey, butter and eggs, and some flour and cereals for all of us. After each long journey on foot (and there was no other transport at her disposal), bent beneath the weight of her sack, she couldn’t straighten her back for a long time; and I used to ask her: “Why are you walking so ugly, mommy?”

I remember also how my foster father, “tevelis”, or “daddy” in Lithuanian, warned me not to move or cry, when they used to hide me in the hole under the stove in case the German soldiers or Lithuanian police came in to check the house. They dug this hole at the first night after my arrival, and it became my permanent asylum in case of danger. I have to confess that I was more afraid of mice and spiders, while sitting in the dark narrow place and not knowing when I would be released, than of the soldiers.

When the front came close to Kaunas, we had to move somewhere from the place we lived. There were factories nearby, and my foster parents were afraid they would be bombed. So, they decided to take me to their friends, or maybe they were relatives, who lived in the countryside. “Mamite” was black haired like me, though blue eyed, and she hoped our family would not be suspicious for the police or simply for curious people. She taught me how to speak to her and what to answer to questions of other people.

It was a risky journey; we had to talk with people how ever we tried to avoid any communications. Now I understand – there obviously were some of them who guessed who I was – but they kept silent.

Eventually, we returned to our house, and after a night of fear (What would the Germans do before they leaved the town? Would we be bombed?) the Soviet Army entered Kaunas. In the evening I wanted to walk outside, but “tevelis” didn’t allow me. He promised that tomorrow I would be able to stay outside for longer.

Next morning, I was still sleeping, when he came in and woke me up: “Go outside, you are free!” I sprung from my bed and run through the yard to the street. An unending column of soldiers marched along the street. These were the Soviets, grey from fatigue and in grey faded uniforms. Such was the image of my freedom! Such was the victorious link of the “chain of help”.

This link consisted of people whom we called together: “the Soviet Army”. But every one of them was a person with his or her destiny. Some of them, or their relatives, suffered from the Stalin dictatorship, and before the war they disliked Stalin. However, more of them had families destroyed by the war and relatives killed by the fascists. These soldiers were united in their hatred of the occupants, in their desperation towards overcoming of a ruthless enemy. And Stalin’s name became their banner, the symbol of their battle. In such a way one tyrant, Hitler, helped another tyrant, Stalin, to win the hearts of his compatriots and to prolong his dictatorship to the time of his natural death.

For the whole time we were under the German occupation, “mamite” feared we would all perish, and she wanted to give me, her child, a closer connection with God, maybe, she thought it would be a better protection. She decided to baptize me, but how to do this when nobody could know she was hiding a Jewish child? She confessed to a priest she knew to be a good man. The priest didn’t deceive her. He taught her how to baptize me, and “mamite” fulfilled the ritual as she understood it.

She never forced me to pray or to go to church, and once told me that she wasn’t completely sure that God existed anyhow! But she would feel softness within and relief when she would go to church to pray. She told me that she had baptized me when I was 20 years old. She didn’t want to force me into the Christian faith; she had only searched for divine protection.

Many years later, it was at the anniversary of the end of war, a correspondent of a local newspaper wanted to write an article about my “mamite” and her husband, about their heroic deeds at the time of war (besides me, they also hid for some time a Russian captive soldier who fled from a concentration camp). When the correspondent asked “mamite” who or what encouraged and helped her to survive and act in such difficult and

dangerous circumstances, she sincerely answered that only God could help her. The correspondent disappeared, and no article was ever published. In the former Soviet Union, God was “taboo”.

But let us return to the mid-war events, where the priest also became a small link in the “chain of help”. The “chain” wouldn’t work if a link, a section, were not reliable. But it did work, being supported by the common effort of people of different nations, religions and social backgrounds, who were united by their conscience for the fulfilment of one purpose: to save a child from death. To give a child, simply a child, a possibility to grow up and to realize the potential, with which this child came into this life.

Every one of the few Jewish children who were saved from the Kaunas ghetto by such a “chain of help” received insights from this “chain”. An insight of treasuring any manifestation of life, an insight of compassion and help, and an insight of devoting this treasure of life to the creation of beauty in any field of their endeavour.

In my case, the potential of a life, preserved with all its insights, is being realized not only by me, but also by my daughter Margarita, my four grandchildren: Maria, Igor Paul, Richard and Elizabeth, and I believe that it will continue with their descendants. All of us have our purposes to fulfil and our “chains” to participate. All of us are living on the Earth thanks to the “chain of help”, and all of us continue to receive uneasy experiences that enable us to understand and assist other people, when they are in need of assistance.

The “chain of help” versus the “chain of cruelty” - this is the only way of love that maintains life on our long-suffering planet, where one action of cruelty causes another in response, and the situation seems to have no end in sight. But look! The whole powerful extermination machine of Hitlerism, with its “order”, supported by soldiers and weapons, couldn’t prevent the salvation of a child, when just several ordinary people joined their efforts in the “chain of help”, led by their conscience, and with the maximal love, care and courage they were able of expressing.

These people weren’t obedient to the laws and rules of the “order” of the fascist state. Quite the reverse, they rejected these rules, when the rules came into disagreement with their conscience. Their conscience appeared to be superior, and, thanks to this, they were able to accomplish what other people, who were simply obedient, could not.

Often, when expressing love, compassion and generosity in our daily life, we don’t know that we actually start the “chain of help”, which will continue to act in the world and bring us and other people unexpected assistance at the very moment when this assistance is most necessary and

helpful. This chain will work through generations, attracting with its magnet more and more links, involving more and more people into the actions of Love.

When the Soviet Army liberated Lithuania from the fascists, those who had originally fled to Russia after the German invasion began to return. My foster father knew from my mother that my father might be alive and trying to find us. He used to walk along the streets of the town asking: "Doesn't anybody know Lamdanskis (my father's surname)?" One day he met one of my father's friends who knew where my father was and sent him a telegram: "Your daughter is alive and well in Kaunas".

When my father came, he found me, 6 years old, talking in Lithuanian language and already attending a Lithuanian school. I had completely forgotten him and didn't want to leave the house of my foster parents. But they persuaded me to go with my father. I can understand how difficult it was for them, but they really loved me and wanted to do their best for me.

We moved to the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, where my father worked on rebuilding projects. Vilnius had been almost completely destroyed by war. There was fierce street fighting there. No electricity, problems with water, nowhere to live. We stayed in a hotel in the central street, one of a few remaining big buildings.

Instead of buildings, there were ruins everywhere, and a lot of unexploded mines in the ruins. We children used to play in the ruins (where else could we play?), and many were injured or killed by mines. Our parents had to be at their workplaces for 12-14 hours a day and we were left to our own devices. I remember the first winter in Vilnius, and me wandering along the snow covered streets with my little wooden toboggan.

My school was situated in the yard of our hotel, and I used to invite my friends to play. Once, I remember, we played with my friend and got a silly idea. Nearing the end and after the war, you could buy bread or other food in a shop only if you possessed special coupons. There were also coupons which could be exchanged for alcohol. A person could buy a limited amount of each product for each unique card. My father didn't drink, but he exchanged the bottles of alcohol for food and other things.

My friend and I were wondering what was so special about alcohol, and decided to try it. At that time, my father had saved up several bottles of vodka. So, being the two smart young ladies that we were, both six years of age, we drank some. After drinking we went to play on the hotel's staircases pretending to be drunk and tottering from side to side. After a

while we went to play on the third floor cornice of the hotel's building. This little alcove had no guard rails.

Of course, this was very dangerous; we could have easily fallen off the cornice, but dangers surrounded us from everywhere in this life changed forever by the war. Only after several hours of our drunken "enjoyment", my father came home and took us off the cornice.

I often cried about my dear Mum, who vanished, and I missed her so much, especially when I got punished. And it happened one happy day that someone told me – she was alive and would be returning from the concentration camp this evening. As we found out later, she was taken from the Kaunas ghetto to Poland, to the Shtuthoff concentration camp, where she suffered from hunger and cold, and her life was under the constant threat.

She managed to escape from the column of prisoners that was led by the fascists to Germany. She and another woman hid in the hay in a shed during a rest stop. By good fortune, the bayonet of the soldier who checked the hay missed them. They went through the ordeals of escape in the dangers and cold of the snowy fields of Poland. Mum's accomplice later told us that my mother saved her life. Her courage and German language preserved them on many occasions.

I remember running to my father's place of work. We had to be at the railway station on time! We were on time – when the train with my Mum, who didn't know if any of her family had survived, arrived to the station, we both met her at the gates. We brought her to our hotel room, and began our family life in the post-war Vilnius, with its everyday problems: queues for sugar, flour, eggs, or any other products, the search for warmth and a place to live.

From his job in the building industry my father received a flat on the third floor of an old building. We occupied three rooms of five in the flat, and our neighbours lived in the remaining two. This was a good situation for the post-war Vilnius, where most families lived in shared flats. The problem was that our flat had a big hole from a shell in a wall. This hole was a memory of the battle for Vilnius.

To make our flat liveable, my father received workers – German prisoners of war who worked at that time over the rebuilding of the Lithuanian capital. I couldn't stand them. I spat at them. I couldn't forgive them my fear and my long term trauma as a helpless child, who was for no reason threatened and punished by the German occupiers.

I just wondered why my mother, who suffered from the Germans even more than me, nevertheless treated them as equals and cared about them.

She fed them with what we had for dinner, and this was a real hospitality having in mind the difficulties with getting anything of food stuff. Later on, I became aware that she understood about life much more than me. She saw a human being in everyone. She understood that anyone might appear in difficult conditions and anyone deserved compassion.

In 1946, my sister was born – in these difficult circumstances. For my mother, exhausted after her ordeals of the concentration camp, my sister's birth was an act of heroism and simultaneously a symbol of life's victory over death. My sister was named Rachel – this was the name of both mother's older sister, who perished in the town of Telshai together with her husband and baby son, and my grandmother, who was killed in the Kaunas ghetto.

After the war, we constantly communicated with Maria and Kazimeras Baksha. I remained their only child, and my parents also became their close relatives. We were in especially intimate relationship with “mamite” who became for me my first teacher of love and spirituality. She passed away at the age of 90, already knowing that she had her first great granddaughter named Maria in her honour. She spent the last years of her life in the family of her relatives, where she helped with raising their children. The most important thing, children could receive from her, was the influence of her aura of love, wisdom and tolerance.

This is possibly an ordinary history of a child in war, because from the child's viewpoint any war means the same: cruelty, dangers, fear and loss of family. But even in these dire circumstances, and possibly especially in them, children are searching for anything bright and joyful. For me, this was music. When I was 8, in the ruins of the post-war Vilnius, one day I discovered a little house surrounded by bushes of violets. A little old lady lived in this wooden house, a piano teacher. She began teaching me music. In the little hat with the old piano, I had my secret life in the immense world of music. Only later on, after several weeks, I confessed to my parents, and they started paying for my lessons. From a Polish family who thought of returning to their homeland, my parents bought the old Knauss piano...